

focused on their responsibilities to foster children.

After a GAO report—requested by Senator GRASSLEY and me—revealed that some State governments are failing to adequately keep and provide information about foster children in their care, I worked with Chairman HERGER and lead sponsor Mr. CAMP to add a new provision to this bill.

The new provision imposes penalties on those States that do not keep up their records, and thereby let their foster children slip through the cracks.

Every new phase in a foster child's journey through the system can be the wrong turn that makes the difference between happiness and despair.

How can we expect them to work hard in school, stay optimistic about their future, and never lose hope if we can't even keep track of their address?

These kids start out in life facing adversity before they even know what the word means. They carry doubt and fear around on their backs like crosses. This provision and this bill will give America's foster children hope, and a better chance at finding the unconditional love they all deserve, but so few have ever known.

I thank the gentlemen for all their hard work in this legislation, and I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of it.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3182, the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003, which continues to reward states for their efforts to promote adoption of children in need of loving families.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation as it reauthorizes the Adoption Incentives program. This program was created as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which was signed into law while I was the Chairman of the Ways and Means' Human Resources Subcommittee. This law has resulted in moving thousands of children out of hopeless foster care situations and into loving adoptive families.

The current Adoption Incentives program rewards states that make gains in the number of children adopted and provides additional incentives for the adoption of foster children with special needs. Between 1997 and 2002, adoptions increased by 64 percent, and adoptions of children with special needs increased by 63 percent. However, more work needs to be done to assist the 542,000 children who remain in foster care, and the 126,000 who are eligible for adoption.

Research suggests that many older children still linger in foster care, so we must do more to encourage states to find adoptive families for these children. The Adoption Promotion Act of 2003 takes the necessary steps to enhance the current incentive program, by creating a new incentive for states that increase adoptions of children age 9 or older. Our children do not deserve to be languishing in foster care or living in dangerous situations. This bill will take a big step towards righting that wrong.

I would like to commend my colleagues on the Committee on Ways and Means, Representatives DAVE CAMP and BEN CARDIN, for their commitment to improving the Adoption Incentives program by the introduction of the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003. Their work on this legislation will assure that states continue to find safe, permanent homes for America's children.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we continue to reward states for their good work in making adoptive matches and add additional incentive for those children still waiting for a home and loving family. With this in mind, I urge my colleagues to support America's foster children who are waiting on adoption by voting for this important bill.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3182.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 3182, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

VETERANS BENEFITS ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2297) to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify and improve certain benefits for veterans, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2297

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Benefits Act of 2003".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Expansion of Montgomery GI Bill education benefits for certain self-employment training.
- Sec. 3. Extension in period of eligibility for survivors' and dependents' education benefits for individuals who are involuntarily ordered to full-time National Guard duty.
- Sec. 4. Extension of Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education.
- Sec. 5. Repeal of provisions relating to obsolete education loan program.
- Sec. 6. Retention of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for surviving spouses remarrying after age 55.
- Sec. 7. Eligibility of surviving spouses who remarry for burial in national cemeteries.
- Sec. 8. Permanent authority for State cemetery grants.

Sec. 9. Reinstatement of veterans vocational training program for certain pension recipients.

Sec. 10. Increase in amounts for certain adaptive benefits for disabled veterans.

Sec. 11. Presumptions of service-connection relating to diseases and disabilities of former prisoners of war.

Sec. 12. Extension of spina bifida benefits for children of Vietnam-era veterans.

Sec. 13. Permanent authority for housing loans for members of the Selected Reserve.

Sec. 14. Adjustment to home loan fees and uniformity of fees for qualifying Reserve members with fees for active duty veterans.

Sec. 15. Reinstatement of minimum requirements for sale of vendee loans.

Sec. 16. Rate of payment of benefits for certain Filipino veterans and their survivors residing in the United States.

Sec. 17. Burial benefits for new Philippine scouts residing in the United States.

Sec. 18. Extension of authority to maintain regional office in the Republic of the Philippines.

Sec. 19. Outstationing of transition assistance program personnel.

Sec. 20. Forfeiture of benefits for subversive activities.

Sec. 21. Technical amendments related to Jobs for Veterans Act.

Sec. 22. Technical and conforming relating to establishment of Social Security Administration as an independent agency.

SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF MONTGOMERY GI BILL EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN SELF-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING.

(a) DEFINITION OF TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT.—Section 3452(e) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "means any" and all that follows and inserting "means any of the following:

"(1) An establishment providing apprentice or other training on the job, including those under the supervision of a college or university or any State department of education.

"(2) An establishment providing self-employment on-job training consisting of full-time training for a period of less than six months that is needed or accepted for purposes of obtaining licensure to engage in a self-employment occupation or required for ownership and operation of a franchise that is the objective of the training.

"(3) A State board of vocational education.

"(4) A Federal or State apprenticeship registration agency.

"(5) A joint apprenticeship committee established pursuant to the Act of August 16, 1937, popularly known as the 'National Apprenticeship Act' (29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

"(6) An agency of the Federal Government authorized to supervise such training."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is six months after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to self-employment on-job training approved and pursued on or after that date.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION IN PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE INVOLUNTARILY ORDERED TO FULL-TIME NATIONAL GUARD DUTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3512(h) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting "or is involuntarily ordered to full-time National Guard duty under section 502(f) of title 32," after "title 10,".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as of September 11, 2001.